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# Exploring comprehensibility, intelligibility and accentedness in a French context: Influence of informal learning on pronunciation

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## Context

French learners of English (FLE) ⇔ acquire linguistic elements (vocabulary and grammar) from informal exposure to authentic language materials (TV series, films, music, games) (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010; Sockett, 2014).

Informal activities impact pronunciation (Yibokou, 2019, 2023).

## Research question

To what extent the pronunciation of FLE is comprehensible, intelligible, and accented.

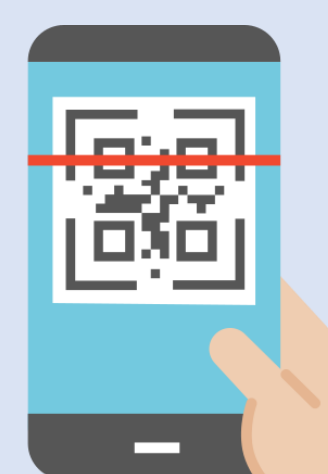
## Method

- Speakers: 10 French students, non-linguistics specialists
  - ✓ Level (CEFR): A2 to C2
  - ✓ Age: 19 to 28
  - ✓ Oral diaries & interviews over a year (2021-22)
  - ✓ Activities: Music, movies, TV series, internet videos, oral interaction, games
  - ✓ Time spent: 100 to 400 hours
  - ✓ Exposition mode: Original version (OV), OV Caption, OV Subtitles
- Raters: 23 English teachers ("non/native")

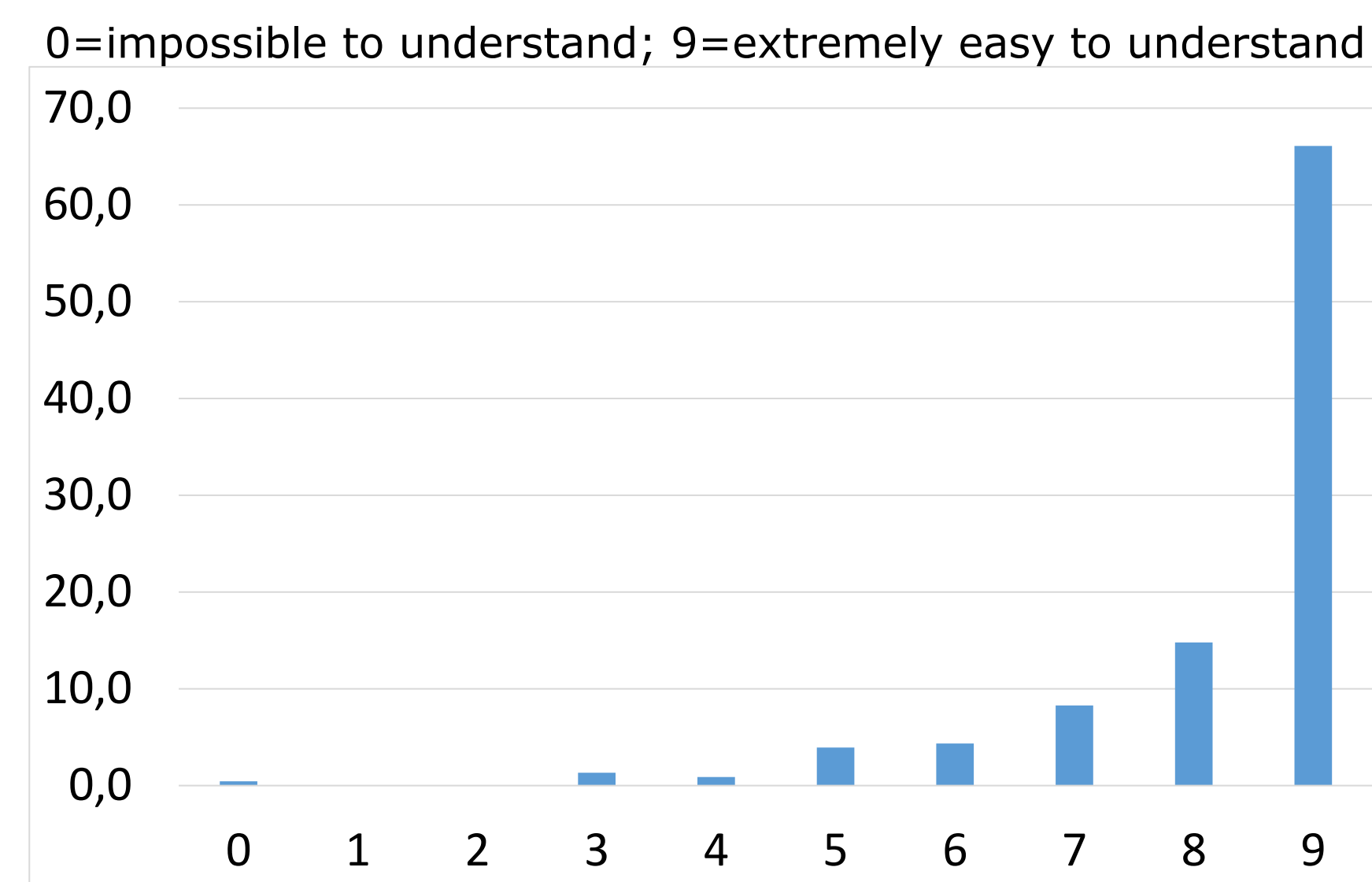


## Materials & Procedure

- 10 speech samples from semi-naturalistic utterances
- 2 distractors: one American accent speaker and one British accent speaker
- 1 warm up question
- 1 Listening test performed through LimeSurvey
- Between 45 min. & 1,5 h.

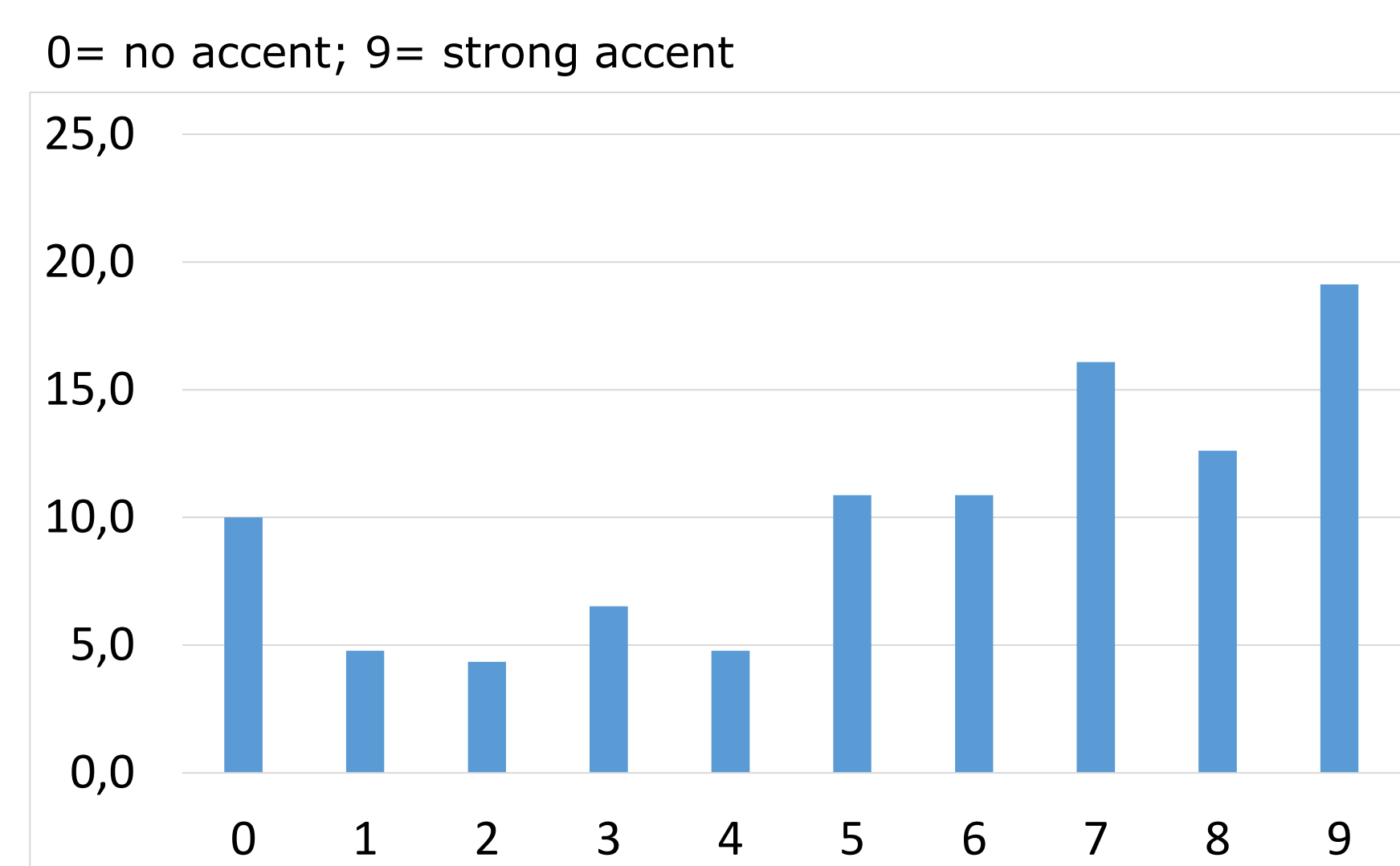


## Comprehensibility



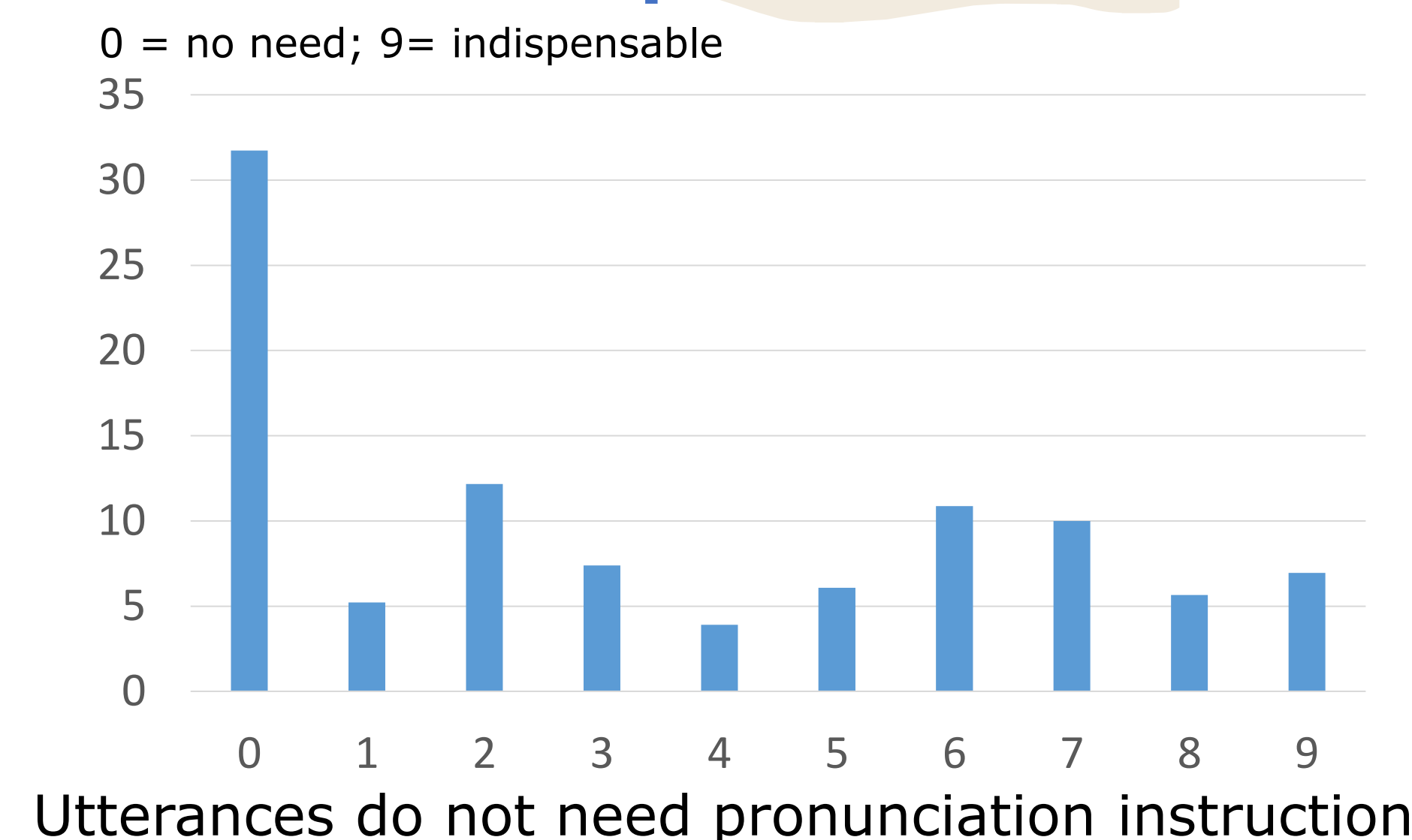
More than 80% of the utterances are comprehensible

## Accentedness



A high percentage of strong "accent"

## Work on pronunciation



Utterances do not need pronunciation instruction

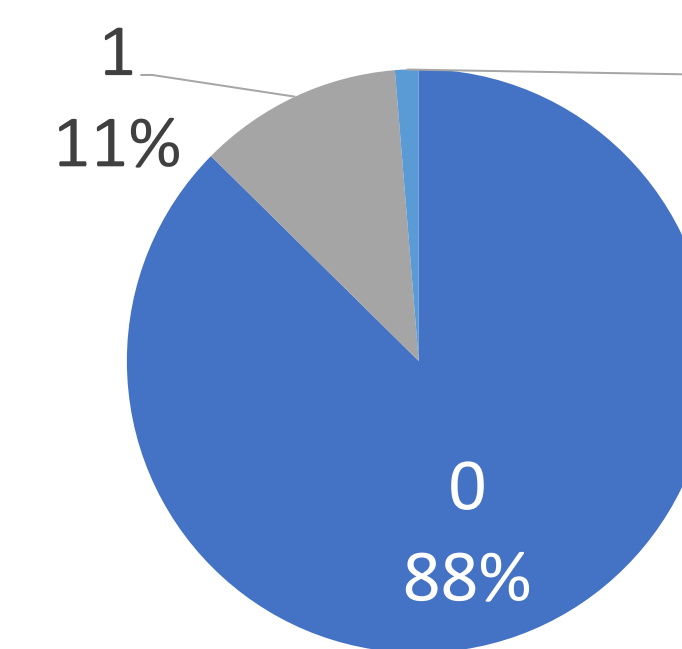
## Correlations

comprehensibility and accentedness (r=.75 p=.012)

## Results

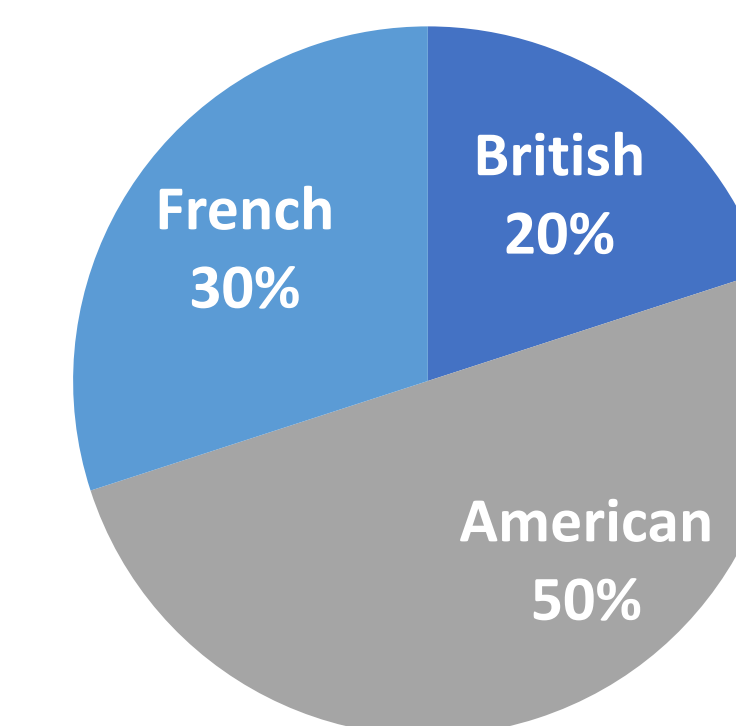
### Intelligibility

0 = no transcription error, 1 = 1 transcription error



87% of the utterances are correctly transcribed

### Accents



Half of the utterances were rated close to American English

### Elements of categorization

American	French	Others	Vocab/grammar
native, le t est comme un d... native	'i' dans 'like' et dans 'minutes' très français	la pointe d'accent espagnol s'entend dans les voyelles	tic de langage ("like") plutôt US
a lotta music (US)	'u' dans 'music' comme beaucoup d'apprenants français	pas très sure mais peut être l'accent est britannique...	bad grammar
benk pour bank	absence de /h/ en house	je n'arrive pas à identifier son accent	Les content words ne sont pas prononcés assez fort.
the american voice	/z/ en "deposit" réalisé comme /s/ - le /θ/ en "thousand" devient /s/	accent africain	O rather than zero
'r' américain	'ei' dans 'neighbourhood' - accent d'un (bon) apprenant français en anglais	Native language	flat est britannique, mais pas de lien avec l'accent perçu

## Discussion

- Pronunciation of FLE is comprehensible and intelligible with the perceived "strong accent".
- French "accent" seems to be less comprehensible and more accented.
- Evidence of pronunciation closer to "American accent".
- Informal learning could be contributing to enhancing comprehensibility, intelligibility and "native-accentedness" in FLE.
- Acquisition happens through full (learner) autonomy: in the absence of explicit pronunciation instruction and following their own choice.
- Based on the notion of learner agency (Miras, 2020), teachers could draw learners' attention to the potentials of informal activities.
- Reflection on how teachers can help students to be more comprehensible and intelligible despite their accent (Gordon & Darcy, 2019).

## Limits

- Results per speaker to see individual "scores" and differences.
- Results for teachers ("native" vs "non-native") to see if important difference in rating and factors underlying (background).
- Experimentation ambitious (too long)?